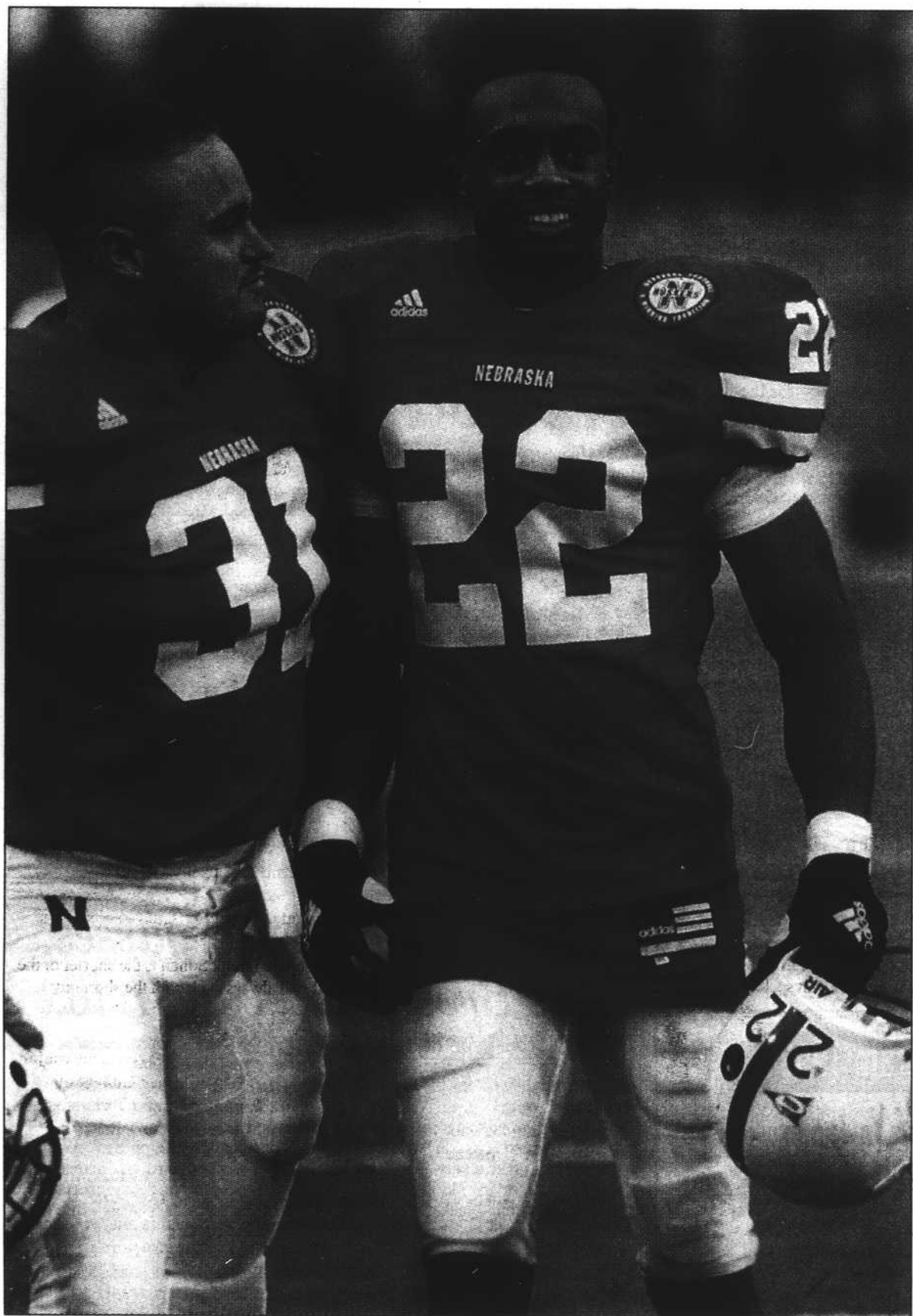


SPORTS

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MIKE WARREN/DN

RIGHT CORNERBACK Ralph Brown smiles while walking off the field with cornerback Tyler Rauenzahn after defeating Southern Mississippi at Memorial Stadium on Sept. 18. Brown has seen fewer passes thrown his way this season because of his experience as a four-year starter in the defensive secondary.

Seeing fewer passes, Brown still can't relax

BY SAMUEL MCKEWON
Senior staff writer

The life of a defensive back is full of paradoxes.

The better they get, the less action they see. And the less a team passes the ball, the more pressure there is to make a play.

Those things considered, NU cornerback Ralph Brown might be in for a heck of a mind game Saturday against Iowa State.

The senior from Hacienda Heights, Calif., one of the top cover corners in the nation, doesn't see many balls thrown his way. Opposing teams would just as soon test less experienced Cornhuskers like Keyuo Craver, who's been up to the challenge, leading the team with eight pass breakups — and he also has two interceptions.

Plus the Cyclones (3-1) don't like to throw the ball much. As the 108th passing team in the country, ISU might look Brown's way only once or twice in Saturday's 6:30 p.m. contest.

For Brown, those games are no easier than contests where teams throw the ball 50 times.

"It is harder," said Brown, who has four pass breakups and one interception this season. "You have to be very mentally sharp. It's just like playing Nebraska. They keep running the ball, running the ball, and you think it's a run — and that play is going to be a pass, and you're going to get beat when you least expect it."

It's a situation Brown's had to deal with all season long.

As a fourth-year starter, Brown's ability has already been proven. His trial by fire occurred his first two seasons at NU, when as freshman and sophomore, he played opposite such experienced cornerbacks as former All-American Michael Booker, who was avoided by quarterbacks nearly every game.

Now, Brown gets the hands-off treatment. And although he terms Craver and the injured Erwin Swiney as

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RALPH BROWN
NU cornerback

“great football players,” Brown’s chess matches aren’t always as fun when passes are thrown 30 yards in the other direction.

“Michael Booker didn’t get any balls thrown his way his senior year, and he was mad, just like I am this year,” Brown said. “With the repetitions I had, I knew they were going to test Keyuo.”

Not that it’s hurt the secondary’s performance much. Nebraska is fourth in the nation in pass efficiency defense, right behind, ironically, Iowa State. The Cyclones have yet to face as sophisticated a passing offense as Nebraska faced with Southern Mississippi, however.

NU Defensive Backs Coach George Darlington said he noticed the secondary’s progression as a unit but cautioned reading too much into numbers this early in the year.

“We’ve probably faced the five weakest offensive teams we were going to face this year, with the exception of Southern Mississippi,” Darlington said. “Time will tell if people look at this defense as one of the best.”

Iowa State, the No. 1 rushing team in the nation, wouldn’t seem to give the Nebraska secondary huge problems on paper. ISU has thrown 60 passes this season; 24 of those came against Kansas State.

Still, Brown insists, the Cyclones have good receivers. One of them is Brown’s close friend, Damien Groce, who has six receptions for 169 yards

Please see **BROWN** on 12

Transfer will miss season with injury

■ **NU forward** George Mazyck is set for surgery today to repair his knee.

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND
Staff writer

The Nebraska men’s basketball team took a blow Tuesday when it was revealed that junior college transfer George Mazyck will miss the entire season because of a knee injury.

The forward from Columbia, S.C., broke his right patella during preseason workouts. Surgery to repair the knee will take place today, and he will be out until next spring.

Knee problems have hindered Mazyck throughout his basketball career. He suffered the same exact injury last season while playing at

Coffeyville (Kan.) Community College. He played just eight games at Coffeyville last season.

Mazyck also tore his anterior-cruciate ligament in the same knee while playing at Missouri during the 1997-98 season. The injury limited him to just four games at MU.

Nebraska trainer Mike Gooding said he was unsure of how the injury occurred.

“He just came in one day, and it was a lot more sore than previously,” Gooding said.

Gooding had been rehabbing Mazyck for his last broken patella.

Head Coach Danny Nee said a couple of weeks ago that Mazyck would be counted on to shore up NU’s front line. He described Mazyck, a 6-foot-9, 270-pounder, as a “physical, tough, strong

Please see **MAZYCK** on 12

NU setter accepts role

BY DARREN IVY
Senior staff writer

Entering the season, junior setter Jill McWilliams expected to be the starting setter in a 5-1 system.

Why should she have expected anything else? She had backed up All-American Fiona Nepo for two years until Nepo’s graduation in 1999, and McWilliams had worked all summer in preparation for her chance to finally lead the Cornhuskers.

What she didn’t expect was Coach Terry Pettit to change to a 6-2 system and have to split time with another setter.

Unlike some players, who might have pouted and taken it as a demotion, McWilliams accepted the role and has tried to make the most of it.

“I feel I can still be just as much of a leader on this team with the role

I have now,” said McWilliams, who leads the team with 326 set assists. “Really it is the same role, it’s just that I am not in there the whole game.”

Adjusting to the split time with another setter and the 6-2 system didn’t happen overnight and, at times, it has been frustrating, McWilliams said.

However, McWilliams’ play this past week against Kansas and Texas A&M made her forget about some of that frustration and gave her confidence that things are becoming settled.

“I feel that as the season has gone on, I am starting to get more

comfortable with the role I have on the team,” said the Des Moines native. “I’m just trying to play so the other players can have confidence in me. I feel with every match it is getting better and better.”

Pettit agreed. “I thought Jill McWilliams set as well in the last two matches as she had all year,” Pettit said. “I think it has to do with confidence. With each match she becomes more comfortable.”

Senior Tonia Tauke said McWilliams is most comfortable when she plays and doesn’t think.

“I think sometimes her mind gets cluttered with the expectations and thinking what she should do in certain situations,” Tauke said. “When she just plays, she’s great. I think we are getting to the point in the season where we just play.”

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